

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 118

By Yarbro

A RESOLUTION to recognize the Vanderbilt Project on Unity and American Democracy.

WHEREAS, at a time when our nation is more divided than ever, we are pleased to recognize a new project that seeks to help Americans overcome their differences and build a better and stronger nation through mutual respect and healthy debate; and

WHEREAS, the Vanderbilt Project on Unity and American Democracy prioritizes community conversations, white papers, podcasts, and briefings with leading experts while elevating the importance of evidence-based reasoning; and

WHEREAS, the project also focuses on listening to others, empathizing with different experiences, understanding different perspectives, and exploring common ground for the future; and

WHEREAS, Samar Ali, founder and CEO of Millions of Conversations, a nonprofit organization working to end stigma and marginalization, serves as co-chair of the project; the former manager of global relations for the State of Tennessee, she has a background in conflict resolution and working across political aisles for the common good; and

WHEREAS, in addition to Ms. Ali, the project is spearheaded by Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Jon Meacham and Governor Bill Haslam; and

WHEREAS, the project seeks to create a virtual public square as a platform through which everyone "at the grassroots level and the grass tops level" alike can discuss unity, shared purpose, and commonly held values; and

WHEREAS, as we face our many problems and differences as a nation, it is imperative that we respectfully discuss and debate what it means to be an American in the 21st century,

and the Vanderbilt project has opened the door for this ongoing exploration of what we mutually believe in and what we can agree to support with our hearts, souls, and minds; and

WHEREAS, the project's first event featured Mr. Meacham, a renowned historian and author; former U.S. Vice President Al Gore, a Democrat; and former U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, a Republican, in a conversation that the audience found refreshing for its inclusiveness; and

WHEREAS, during these uncertain times, we must look toward restoring unity and civility in our nation, and the Vanderbilt project is most certainly a step in the right direction; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor and commend the Vanderbilt Project on Unity and American Democracy and its co-founders for their ongoing commitment to promoting healthy debate, exploration of shared purpose and values, and renewed empathy and civility among all Americans.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.